

The *Hippias Minor* and the traditions of Homeric criticism*

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Abstract:

Homer plays an important role in the discussion in the *Hippias Minor* of voluntary and involuntary action and their relation to knowledge and goodness. This paper argues that the *Hippias Minor* sheds light on the Homeric criticism of the late fifth and early fourth centuries, and that it looks forward to, and significantly influenced, the tradition of Hellenistic and later Homeric criticism, for which our best witnesses are the Homeric scholia. This paper considers Socrates' presentation of Achilles and Odysseus in the *Hippias Minor* and makes the case, more strongly than it has been made before, that this dialogue was an important influence on the later critical tradition.

Homer plays an important role in the discussion in the *Hippias Minor* of voluntary and involuntary action and their relation to knowledge and goodness. Unlike the *Ion*, to which it bears in some ways a striking resemblance, and not merely in the manifestly parodic presentation of the eponymous figures of the two dialogues,¹ poetry and performance are not the principal subjects of the *Hippias Minor*. However, this dialogue arguably sheds as much or even more light on the Homeric criticism of the late fifth and early fourth centuries as does the *Ion*, and – again like the *Ion* – it looks forward to, and significantly influenced, the rich tradition of Hellenistic and later Homeric criticism, for which our best witnesses are the Homeric scholia.² In this paper, I want both to consider how Plato³ presents Socrates' treatment of Achilles and Odysseus in the *Hippias Minor* and also to make the case more strongly than it has been made before that this dialogue was an important influence on the later critical tradition.⁴ I hope also to highlight some of the important and still pressing critical questions that this dialogue's treatment of Homer brings to the fore, even when they are not formulated explicitly here by Plato.

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¹ Cf., e.g., Kahn (1996) 100-4; particularly striking are the respective claims of the eponymous figures to superiority, cf. *Ion* 530c7-d7 ~ *Hipp. Min.* 364a7-9.

² For this aspect of the *Hipp. Min.* cf. esp. Giuliano (1995); for the *Ion* Hunter (2011) and (2012) 89-108.

³ Throughout this paper I assume without discussion that the *Hippias Minor* is indeed the work of Plato; for bibliography on this question cf. Pinjuh (2014) 35-9.

⁴ This paper makes no claim to contribute to the 'philosophical' issues of the dialogue; thus, for example, I translate ψευδής etc. as 'liar' etc., without regard to the important questions of capability v. disposition and so forth. Helpful guidance and bibliography for the philosophical issues of the dialogue can be found in Blondell (2002) 128-64 and Pinjuh (2014).

When the dialogue opens, Hippias has just delivered an ἐπίδειξις on poetry (363c1-3), including περὶ Ὀμήρου (cf. 363b1, c2-3).⁵ Eudikos is encouraging Socrates to react to Hippias' performance by either 'joining in the praise' (a possibility that shows how little Eudikos knows of Socrates) or by proving him wrong (ἐλέγχειν), and Socrates tells him that one thing he would like to ask Hippias derives from an opinion that he had heard expressed by Eudikos' own father, Apemantos:

καὶ γὰρ τοῦ σοῦ πατρὸς Ἀπημάντου ἤκουον ὅτι ἡ Ἰλιάς κάλλιον εἶη ποίημα τῷ Ὀμήρῳ ἢ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια, τοσοῦτω δὲ κάλλιον, ὅσω ἀμείνων Ἀχιλλεὺς Ὀδυσσέως εἶη· ἐκάτερον γὰρ τούτων τὸ μὲν εἰς Ὀδυσσέα ἔφη πεποιήσθαι, τὸ δ' εἰς Ἀχιλλέα. περὶ ἐκείνου οὖν ἡδέως ἂν, εἰ βουλομένῳ ἐστὶν Ἰππία, ἀναπυθοίμην ὅπως αὐτῷ δοκεῖ περὶ τοῖν ἀνδροῖν τούτοις, πότερον ἀμείνω φησὶν εἶναι ...

I used to hear your father Apemantos [saying]⁶ that Homer's *Iliad* was a finer poem than the *Odyssey*, and that it was as much finer as Achilles was better than Odysseus; for of these two poems, so he said, one had been composed about Odysseus and the other about Achilles.⁷ If Hippias is willing, this is what I would like to ask him: which of these two men does he say is the better ...

Plato, *Hippias Minor* 363b1-c1

How banal is Apemantos' view intended to sound? Is it simply the late fifth-century *communis opinio*, at least as Plato reconstructs it?⁸ We might think that such a *synkrisis* leading to the establishment of a hierarchy of value came naturally to agonistic Greek gentlemen, particularly when the Homeric poems themselves and the

⁵ Although 363c1-3 suggests that Hippias' performance had been a wide-ranging one, we are very likely intended to understand that this ἐπίδειξις was Hippias' 'Trojan Oration', cf. below p. 0. Pace Pinjuh (2014) 99, καὶ γὰρ at 363b1 need not imply that Hippias had discussed the question which Socrates is subsequently to pose to him, although 364c1-4 may in fact carry that implication: note the use of the imperfect tense in Socrates' questions there to Hippias. Blondell (2002) 132 n.110 similarly suggests that καὶ γὰρ implies that Hippias too shares Apemantos' view; this is unnecessary (cf. Denniston (1954) 109), though the dialogue will make clear that Hippias would have sympathy with Apemantos' view of Achilles and Odysseus, if not necessarily with his opinion about their respective poems. For the περὶ Ὀμήρου tradition more generally cf. Hunter (2012) 91-2.

⁶ Some critics assume that Socrates here refers to a written work by the otherwise obscure Apemantos, cf., e.g., Luzzatto (1996) 29; this view is not, of course, ruled out by ἤκουον, but a reference to informal conversation seems to me more likely. A third alternative would be that Socrates heard a 'lecture' by Apemantos (cf. Pinjuh (2014) 98 n.227).

⁷ As Giuliano (1995) 32 notes, this apparently inconsequential observation seems to look forward to the later ζήτημα, preserved for us by the exegetical scholia on *Il.* 1.1, as to why the *Iliad* was not entitled the 'Achilleid', despite *Odyssey* being the title of Homer's other poem.

⁸ So, e.g., Giuliano (1995) 20, 31. Wilamowitz (1920) 136 describes the question of 'which is better' as 'rather childish' and the inference which follows about the relative merit of the poems as 'still more childish'.

literature which they influenced gave such prominence to comparisons between individual characters;⁹ nevertheless, the translation of what turns out to be a moralising or ethical judgement about the central characters of the poems into a judgement about the value of the respective poems is, however unsurprising it may now seem to us, deceptively significant.¹⁰ It would be a familiar move for the Platonic Socrates to begin his discussion from a piece of very commonplace wisdom, which he can then proceed to deconstruct, but – as again with the *Ion* – we should sense here a long history of ancient criticism beginning to unfold. In the *Ion* also, one of the things at issue was the καλόν in poetry, what makes a poem καλῶς πεποιημένον and who is to judge this; in that dialogue the criterion which was made to bear the principal weight was that of the accuracy of the information provided in the poem. In the *Hippias Minor*, however, moral judgements about the characters are to carry that weight, but both dialogues lead forward to a style of criticism in which the καλόν of poetry indeed subsumes judgements about such things as the accuracy of what is described and the moral value of the characters, but also looks to other, what we might loosely call, ‘aesthetic’ criteria. Moralising always remained at the very heart of mainstream criticism, and it could hardly be otherwise, given the very close links between ‘literary criticism’, education and rhetoric, and not just the critical mainstream was involved. Characters who were morally questionable, let alone morally worthless, were always to prove a bit awkward to handle. Aristotle found no place in tragedy for the μοχθηροί (*Poetics* 1452b36-3a4), and he condemned the Menelaos of Euripides’ *Orestes* as showing ‘unnecessary πονηρία of character’ (1454a29); as is well known, Aristophanes of Byzantium elaborated this into a view that all the characters of that play except Pylades were φαῦλοι – the play was χείριστον τοῖς ἡθεσι – although the play itself was a great success (*Hypoth.* 43-4 Diggle).¹¹

One detail of expression which is connected to this link between the moral goodness of characters and critical judgements about the works in which they appear is the oscillation between Socrates’ original question as to ‘which (of Achilles and Odysseus) is better’ (cf. 363b7-c1, 364b4) and Hippias’ answer in terms of characteristics ‘made by Homer’ (364c5); Socrates then adopts Hippias’ mode in referring to his initial question at 370d7-e1 (and cf. 364e5-6). However inconsequential this may seem, the difference between ‘Achilles is better than Odysseus’ and ‘Homer has made Achilles better than Odysseus’ is, from the perspective of the history of criticism, potentially very significant, particularly when it is placed, as it is in the *Hippias Minor*, within the overall context of a question as to which of their respective poems is ‘better’. If we translate ποιεῖν as ‘represent’, then we can see how easy is the slippage between ‘represent a character as better’ and ‘represent a character better’; the predicative adjective fuses eventually into a quality of the representation rather than of the character, and this was clearly a significant development towards a ‘literary’ or ‘aesthetic’ mode of criticism. This is not Plato’s concern in the *Hippias Minor*, but the part that this dialogue played in opening up potentially powerful critical questions certainly deserves more attention than it normally receives.

⁹ Cf. Giuliano (1995) 32-4, adducing *Iliad* 2.761-9 and other passages.

¹⁰ Pinjuh (2014) 99-101 studies the inter-relations of the various senses of καλός and ἀγαθός.

¹¹ See Fantuzzi (2014).

Another Platonic passage which Apemantos' view should call to mind is Protagoras' famous view of the 'most important part of education', expressed at the head of the discussion of Simonides' poem for Scopas:

ἡγοῦμαι, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐγὼ ἀνδρὶ παιδείας μέγιστον μέρος εἶναι
περὶ ἐπῶν δεινὸν εἶναι· ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν λεγόμενα
οἷόν τ' εἶναι συνιέναι ἅ τε ὀρθῶς πεποιήται καὶ ἅ μὴ, καὶ ἐπίστασθαι
διελεῖν τε καὶ ἐρωτώμενον λόγον δοῦναι.

Plato, *Protagoras* 338e7-9a2

Socrates, I consider that the most important part of a man's education is to be clever about verses. That means being able to understand in what the poets say what is correctly composed and what is not, and knowing how to distinguish them and give an account when asked.

The Platonic *Hippias* will indeed claim to be περὶ ἐπῶν δεινός and to be able to 'make distinctions'; Socrates asks Hippias 'How did you distinguish between (διέκρινες) Achilles and Odysseus?' (364c2), and he later claims that he had thought that it was 'difficult to judge (δύσκριτον) which of the two was better concerning lying and truth-telling and the rest of virtue' (370e2-3). Protagoras' discussion of Simonides' ode is to draw attention to an alleged inconsistency in the poem, an inconsistency which, so Protagoras claims, would deprive it of the soubriquet of being καλῶς (or ὀρθῶς) πεποιημένον (339b7-10); the *epideixis* by Socrates which follows in that dialogue is (in part) an attempt to remove the charge of inconsistency. In the *Hippias Minor* also, conversation will turn to an alleged inconsistency in Achilles' words and deeds in *Iliad* 9. In this dialogue, it will be Socrates who insists on the inconsistency, though not (at any rate, not explicitly) in order to 'downgrade' Homer, but rather simply to refute Hippias' view of the relative merits of Achilles and Odysseus; Hippias, for his part, admits the inconsistency, but seeks to explain it. The recurrent pattern running through the *Protagoras* and the *Hippias Minor* may be thought to point to a Platonic recreation of a genuine moment (or moments) in the history of criticism; it is, for example, easy enough to imagine a setting (and/or an origin) both for such 'comparative' criticism and for allegations of 'inconsistency' in sympotic discussion, and we shall see that Hippias' answer to Socrates' initial question may lend some weight to that suspicion.

Finally, we may wonder to what extent the view ascribed to Apemantos is reflected elsewhere in the literature of the late fifth century. It is, for example, a stand-by of modern criticism of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* that Odysseus is somehow 'sophistic' and that the confrontation of Achilles and Odysseus in *Iliad* 9 forms a particularly important part of the background to Sophocles' play. The *Hippias Minor* can serve to remind us that behind the tragedy lies not only Homer, but also contemporary and earlier discussion of the Homeric poems. When Odysseus (v. 119) holds out to Neoptolemus the possibility of winning a reputation as both σοφός and ἀγαθός, i.e. both an Odyssean and an Achillean reputation, it is hard not to think of the kind of debates which we see reflected in the Platonic dialogue. When, moreover, Neoptolemus tells Odysseus that he would 'rather act nobly and fail than win an ignoble victory' (vv. 94-5), the Sophoclean scholia (on v. 94) gloss this distinction as one between 'telling the truth' and 'lying' (ψευδολογία), and observe that 'Sophocles brings [Neoptolemus] on speaking his father's speech, "Hateful to me like the gates of Hades ...". As is very well recognized, the opening scene between Odysseus and Neoptolemus replays in various ways the exchange of speeches

between Odysseus and Achilles in *Iliad* 9; the scholiast certainly did not need the *Hippias Minor* to remind him of Achilles' famous opening words, but we may well suspect that those words came as readily to the minds of some of Sophocles' audience as they did to that of the scholiast, and the *Hippias Minor* may thus shed suggestive light on aspects of the reception of Homer at the end of the fifth century. Sophocles' play was not an 'unmediated' creative response to Homer and the cyclic poems, but rather one which reflected contemporary discussion of early epic, and itself was a contribution to an on-going and vibrant debate. Drama is in fact some of our best evidence for such critical debates, however difficult this evidence is to use at the level of detail.

When Socrates gets his chance to question Hippias, he asks him 'which (of Achilles and Odysseus) do you say is better (ἀμείνων) and in what respect (κατὰ τί)?' (364b4-5) and (a potentially different question) 'How did you distinguish them?' (364c2). Hippias' answer has perhaps become stale with familiarity, but its oddness is important:

φημι γὰρ Ὅμηρον πεποιημέναι ἄριστον μὲν ἄνδρα Ἀχιλλέα τῶν εἰς
Τροίαν ἀφικομένων, σοφώτατον δὲ Νέστορα, πολυτροπώτατον δὲ
Ὀδυσσεά.

I say that Homer made Achilles the best man of those who went to Troy,
Nestor the wisest and Odysseus the most *polytropos*.

Plato, *Hippias Minor* 364c4-7

In ascribing ἄριστος to Achilles, Hippias might be thought to be picking up Socrates' question as to which of the two was ἀμείνων, but the manner of the answer, in which three, not two, heroes are ascribed superlative qualities, suggests that Hippias rather is referring to Achilles' unchallenged supremacy in battle - he is 'best of the Achaeans' - whereas it is others who take the prize in other qualities. The form of Hippias' answer may be seen as a version of the familiar sympotic 'What is best?' question or of the kind of popular 'priamel' of which we find 'literary' instances in, for example, Sappho fr. 16 Voigt and at the head of Pindar's *First Olympian*. An elegiac couplet which turns up in various forms in archaic and classical literature (cf. Soph. fr. 356 R) offers one of the clearest instances of the pattern:

κάλλιστον τὸ δικαιότατον· λῶιστον δ' ὑγιαίνειν·
πράγμα δὲ τερπνότατον, τοῦ τις ἐρεῖ, τὸ τυχεῖν.

Theognis 255-6

What is most just is fairest; best is to be healthy; the sweetest thing is to get
what you desire.

Despite the familiarity of its form, however, there is something remarkable in Hippias' answer which is rarely acknowledged. It would be easy enough to imagine a fifth-century discussion as to which of Homer's heroes was 'best' or 'wisest', as the quality being judged (prowess in battle, wisdom) was shared among more than one hero, although Achilles was always likely to be ἄριστος, provided that word was interpreted as Homer was normally understood to have used it, for Homer himself appeared to have cast his vote for that hero (cf. esp. *Il.* 2.768-9). The crown for

σοφία, particularly as exhibited in rhetoric,¹² might, however, well have been disputed between Nestor and Odysseus, and there is some late evidence that a way was discovered to accommodate the claims of both; here again it is not difficult to see the *Hippias Minor* as a stimulus to the critical tradition. In his commentary on the proem of the *Odyssey*, Eustathius notes that in the *Iliad* Odysseus was not yet ‘wiser’ (σοφώτερος) than Nestor, but his great wanderings after the war brought him huge ἐμπειρία, ‘experience’, which allowed him to surpass even Nestor (*Hom.* 1381.61-1382.2, cf. also 240.17-18); this interpretation is connected with a view that νόον ἔγνων in *Od.* 1.3 does not (or not only) mean ‘[Odysseus] learned the minds [of many men]’ but rather ‘[Odysseus] gathered intelligence’, i.e. became himself more intelligent as a result of his wanderings.¹³ The opening of the *Odyssey* clearly produced ancient responses along the lines of ‘travel broadens the mind’; a scholion on v. 3 explains that Homer added νόον ἔγνων because ‘there are foolish people who visit many cities and lands and never learn anything’ (Schol. 1.3g Pontani). How far back such criticism goes we cannot of course say, but the idea that Odysseus’ wisdom developed through his adventures certainly set in early in the critical tradition, and of course many modern critics have argued that such a development is already discernible in the *Odyssey* itself, as Odysseus seeks not to repeat the nearly terminal ‘mistakes’ of the Cyclops-episode.

If, however, one might reasonably debate about ‘who was the wisest of the Greeks?’, the same could hardly be said of ‘who was the most πολύτροπος?’. This epithet occurs only twice in the Homeric corpus (*Od.* 1.1, 10.330), on both occasions with reference to the Odysseus of the *Odyssey*; that it is applied to Odysseus in the opening verse of that poem makes it, of course, almost his signature epithet. The question ‘Which of the heroes was most *polytropos*?’, would, on the face of it, be to anyone but the Platonic Socrates a non-question.¹⁴ One can just about imagine a sophistic *epideixis* demonstrating that a hero other than Odysseus was the most πολύτροπος, because although this epithet is only applied by Homer to Odysseus, it actually refers to a quality shared by more than one hero; if indeed we can imagine this, however, it is primarily because that is what Socrates in fact offers us in the *Hippias Minor*.¹⁵ It is presumably important that no one in the *Hippias Minor* makes the (to us obvious) point that Homer applies the epithet only to Odysseus, and that fact was hardly unavailable or unknown in the fifth and fourth centuries BC; certainly, one does not need the TLG to discover it. When Socrates claims that he had absolutely no idea what Hippias meant by saying that Homer made Odysseus ‘most

¹² For Nestor and Odysseus as Homer’s principal rhetoricians cf. esp. Pl. *Phdr.* 261b-c; a contrast between these two ‘orators’ was to have a very long critical history, cf. the following note.

¹³ Cf. the scholia on 1.3 f-h Pontani. The *Hippias Minor* also played a role in the rich tradition of rhetorical discussion about the competing speeches of Odysseus and Nestor in Book 2 of the *Iliad*; Agamemnon seems to award the palm for speaking to Nestor (2.370-4), and the critical tradition worked overtime to justify and/or nuance that decision.

¹⁴ Cf., e.g., Blondell (2002) 135.

¹⁵ That Socrates’ Homeric ‘performance’ in the *Hippias Minor* amounts to an *epideixis* περὶ Ὁμήρου is another feature shared with the *Ion* where, despite Ion’s best efforts, it is Socrates who delivers such a lecture about poetry.

polytropos’, his words presumably gesture to a debate about the term,¹⁶ but they leave us no wiser as to why Plato made Hippias answer in this way.

One common (and attractive) answer to this problem is that Plato here preserves a genuine fragment of Hippias’ Homeric criticism; Diels-Kranz offer it a place as illustrative of Hippias’ ‘Lehre’ (86 A10), and the manner of Hippias’ response to Socrates, ‘I am willing to go through for you even more clearly than I did then what I say both about these men and others’ (364c3-4), suggests that we are to imagine that Hippias’ *epideixis* was a frequently heard performance (note the present tense of λέγω at 364c4). So too, it is regularly argued that the discussion which follows, which highlights Hippias’ negative view of πολυτροπία, shadows the real Hippias’ discussion of Odysseus, to a greater or lesser degree.¹⁷ Not incompatible with the view that we have here a ‘fragment’ of Hippias would be the observation that Hippias thus not only denies to Odysseus the acclaim of being σοφώτατος, but also avoids the obviousness of a simple *synkrisis* between bravery and wisdom, with the central figure of each poem assigned to one category; such a simple distinction would have foreshadowed the interpretation of the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, reported in Demodocus’ song at *Od.* 8.75-7, as a dispute over the relative merits of ἀνδρεία and σύνεσις or φρόνησις (cf. scholia on vv. 75, 77), an interpretation which may well in fact go back to the fifth century at least (we think again of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*). So obvious a gambit is, however, not worthy of a Hippias in his epideictic pomp, a figure who, moreover, clearly sets himself up as ‘the Nestor for this generation’.¹⁸ The smart paradox (as Hippias sees it) in his answer, a paradox which Socrates’ exclamatory βαβαί in part acknowledges (364c7), is that he finds a hero other than Odysseus who is σοφώτατος and is thus able to assign another (very surprising) superlative to the Ithacan hero.

In seeking to unravel this question further, we enter the very murky waters of the relationship between the *Hippias Minor*, the known views of the ‘real’ Hippias, and the discussion of πολύτροπος by Antisthenes, which is partially preserved for us by Porphyry in his note on the opening verse of the *Odyssey*. The problems surrounding this fascinating text cannot be dealt with here at any length,¹⁹ but they

¹⁶ Cf. further below.

¹⁷ A variant of this view is that the answer of the Platonic Hippias goes back to a representation of Hippias by Antisthenes, cf. further below.

¹⁸ Lampert (2002) 238, cf. Blondell (2002) 134 on Nestor as ‘ancestor and paradigm’ for sophists such as Hippias. Hippias wrote a ‘Trojan Oration’ in which Nestor advised Neoptolemus on how a young man could achieve renown (*Hippias Maior* 286a5-b4, Hippias, 86 A2, 9 D-K); this was, very likely, the very *epideixis* to which Socrates had just listened as the *Hippias Minor* opens (cf. *Hipp. Mai.* 286b5-6). Socrates’ ironic praise of Hippias at *Hipp. Mai.* 281c2-3 is perhaps intended to echo Hippias’ own claims in the ‘Trojan Oration’. Brancacci (2004) suggests that Hippias’ plea to Socrates and Protagoras at *Protagoras* 337e2-8b2 is modelled on that of Nestor to Achilles and Agamemnon at *Iliad* 1.274-9; the idea is attractive, particularly in view of Hippias’ obvious interest in the figure of Nestor.

¹⁹ Cf. Pfeiffer (1968) 37, and esp. Giuliano (1995) and Luzzatto (1996), both of whom supply rich bibliography; further bibliography may be traced also through Montiglio (2011) 21-4. The text bristles with problems, both textual and interpretative, but many do not affect the limited scope of the present discussion. Richardson (1975) 77-81 offers a general survey of Antisthenes as a Homeric critic, but his view of the discussion of πολύτροπος has been superseded. One aspect of the matter which has

can also not simply be ignored. The relevant part of the scholium reads as follows in Pontani's text:²⁰

οὐκ ἐπαινεῖν φησιν Ἀντισθένης Ὅμηρον τὸν Ὀδυσσεύα μᾶλλον ἢ ψέγειν, λέγοντα αὐτὸν πολύτροπον. οὐκ οὖν τὸν Ἀχιλλεὺς καὶ τὸν Αἴαντα πολυτρόπους πεποιημένους, ἀλλ' ἀπλοῦς καὶ γεννάδας· οὐδὲ τὸν Νέστορα τὸν σοφὸν οὐ μὰ Δία δόλιον καὶ παλίμβολον τὸ ἦθος, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς τῷ Ἀγαμέμνονι συνόντα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν καὶ εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον εἴ τι ἀγαθὸν εἶχε συμβουλεύοντα καὶ οὐκ ἀποκρυπτόμενον. καὶ τοσοῦτον ἀπέειπε τοῦ τὸν τοιοῦτον τρόπον ἀποδέχεσθαι ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς, ὥς ἐχθρὸν ἡγεῖσθαι ὁμοίως τῷ θανάτῳ ἐκείνῳ,

ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεῦθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη (*Il.* 9.313). λύων οὖν ὁ Ἀντισθένης φησί· τί οὖν; ἄρα γε πονηρὸς ὁ Ὀδυσσεύς ὅτι πολύτροπος ἐρρέθη; καὶ μήν, διότι σοφός, οὕτως αὐτὸν προσείρηκεν μήποτε οὖν τρόπος τὸ μὲν τι σημαίνει τὸ ἦθος, τὸ δὲ τι σημαίνει τὴν τοῦ λόγου χρῆσιν· εὐτρόπος γὰρ ἀνὴρ ὁ τὸ ἦθος ἔχων εἰς τὸ εὖ τετραμμένον. τρόποι δὲ λόγου +αἵτιοι αἱ+ πλάσεις· καὶ χρῆται τῷ τρόπῳ καὶ ἐπὶ φωνῆς καὶ ἐπὶ μελῶν ἐξαλλαγῆς, ὥς ἐπὶ τῆς ἀηδόνης·

ἢ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χεῖρ πολυηχέα φωνήν (*Od.* 19.521) εἰ δὲ οἱ σοφοὶ δεινοὶ εἰσι διαλέγεσθαι, ἐπίστανται καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ νόημα κατὰ πολλοὺς τρόπους λέγειν· ἐπιστάμενοι δὲ πολλοὺς τρόπους λόγων περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, πολύτροποι ἂν εἶεν. εἰ δὲ οἱ σοφοί, καὶ ἀγαθοὶ εἰσι. διὰ τοῦτό φησι τὸν Ὀδυσσεύα Ὅμηρος σοφὸν ὄντα πολύτροπον εἶναι, ὅτι δὴ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἡπίστατο πολλοῖς τρόποις συνεῖναι.

Schol. Hom. *Od.* 11 Pontani = Antisthenes fr. 51 Caizzi

Antisthenes says that Homer does not praise Odysseus so much as blame him, in calling him *polutropos*.²¹ He did not make Achilles and Ajax *polutropoi*, but straightforward and noble; nor, by Zeus, was the wise Nestor devious and unstable in his character, but he dealt straightforwardly with Agamemnon and everyone else, and if he had any good advice for the army he gave it and did not conceal it. So far was Achilles from accepting such a character that he considered as hateful as death any man 'who concealed one thing in his heart and said another' (*Il.* 9.313). Antisthenes' solution was as follows. What then? Was Odysseus a bad man because he was called *polutropos*? Rather, he called him this because he was wise. Is it not the case that *tropos* may mean 'character', but also means 'the use of words'? A man who is *eutropos* has a character which is turned towards the good, but the *tropoi* of words are ...

not yet received the attention it deserves is that Dio Chrys. 71.2-3 juxtaposes a reworking of *Hipp. Min.* 368b-d to a description of Odysseus which seems all but certainly indebted to Antisthenes' discussion of πολύτροπος, cf. Fornaro in Nesselrath (2009) 144. That passage of Dio is, admittedly, an intertextual patchwork: ἀπαρχὰς τῆς σοφίας in 71.2 seems to go back to Plato, *Prt.* 343b1, which is more fully reworked in 72.12.

²⁰ I accept the now standard view that the last part of the scholium, beginning with a reference to Pythagoras, has nothing to do with Antisthenes. For other English translations of the scholium cf. Kahn (1996) 122-3, Montiglio (2011) 21-2.

²¹ On the difficulties that this sentence has caused cf. Luzzatto (1996) 306-8.

And [Homer] uses *tropos* both for the voice and for the exchange of songs, as of the nightingale, ‘who frequently rings the changes as she pours out her richly varied voice’ (*Od.* 19.521). If the wise are clever at dialogue, they know also how to express the same thought in many *tropoi*; as they know many *tropoi* of words about the same thing, they would be *polutropoi*. If they are wise, they are also good. For this reason Homer says that Odysseus, who is wise, is *polutropos*, because he knows how to converse with men in many *tropoi*.

The obvious contradiction between the two claims in the scholium about what Antisthenes said is most easily explained by the fact that the negative view of πολύτροπος with which the text opens was indeed expressed in a work of Antisthenes, but it is not a view to which Antisthenes himself subscribed. This has often led to the view that this work was very likely a dialogue, and the suggestion (or assumption) has, moreover, often been made that this will have been a dialogue between Hippias, who expressed the negative view with which the text begins, and Socrates. I am very sceptical of at least the second half of this view, and Luzzatto rightly, I think, remains non-committal about the nature of Antisthenes’ text; Porphyry offers the familiar shape of a Homeric ‘problem’ and its ‘solution’, but we cannot assume that this is how Antisthenes presented it – his work, perhaps the περὶ Ὀδυσσεΐας, might have been an essay, not a dialogue. Be that as it may, the *Hippias Minor* certainly lends colour to the suggestion that the negative view of πολύτροπος expressed in Antisthenes’ work was there associated with Hippias; the features shared between the two texts, including the quotation of the opening of Achilles’ speech to Odysseus in *Iliad* 9, are certainly very striking. Scholars have sought arguments as to whether Plato is responding to Antisthenes, or *vice versa*, or whether both are responding independently to Hippias, or indeed whether the truth lies in some combination of these possibilities; the problem has both a specific interest for the history of Socratic discussion, and also a broader methodological importance for the study of fourth-century philosophical texts in general, but neither can properly be pursued here.

Antisthenes’ account of πολύτροπος turns on a semantic analysis of the kind in which we know he was very interested. τρόπος has, in this analysis, two meanings, and in πολύτροπος Homer is alleged to use the noun in its linguistic sense of ‘form of speech, speech-usage’; the evidence for this claim is apparently found in the use of τρωπᾶω of the nightingale and its voice in one verse of the *Odyssey*. There is no other evidence to support this alleged usage of Homer, and so we might at least wonder in passing what was the tone of Antisthenes’ defence of Odysseus. Modern readers are very quick to see Socrates’ treatment of Achilles in the *Hippias Minor* as unserious or even as a parody of Homeric criticism,²² but we might think that Antisthenes’ argument, as far as the scholium of Porphyry allows us to reconstruct it, has at least as good a claim to have been ‘playful’, in whatever sense we wish to interpret that. That Antisthenes seems to have represented Odysseus as a master of

²² Cf. below p.0. I suspect that we may be able to see the influence of Antisthenes’ discussion in the famous riddling epigram of Philitas about the alder-tree (fr. 10 Powell = 25 Spanoudakis = 12 Sbardella). Cerri (2005) has persuasively connected this poem with Odysseus and, if this is correct, the final verse μύθων παντοίων οἶμον ἐπιστάμενος may evoke πολύτροπος, as explained by Antisthenes, just as (so Cerri) πολλὰ μογήσας in v. 3 evokes πολύτλας and similar epithets.

Socratic-style dialectic must increase our sense that this *epideixis*, like so many sophistic performances, was leavened with a generous dose of the humorously paradoxical. We may perhaps compare the claim of the Platonic Protagoras that Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod and so forth were all sophists *avant la lettre* (Prt. 316d-e). As for what might have been Antisthenes' discussion of the other meaning of τρόπος, namely ἦθος, 'character', we can reconstruct little of this, but – as critics have noted – Eustathius' observation (*Hom.* 1381.41) that Homer never uses τρόπος in this sense, and so πολύτροπος could not mean 'having an unstable/changeable character', may eventually go back to a fuller version of Antisthenes' text; certainly, Porphyry's citation is in turn an important source for Eustathius' discussion.

One further aspect of Porphyry's summary of Antisthenes is important in the present context. Although the negative view of πολύτροπος, whether that was expressed in the character of Hippias or by Antisthenes himself before he demolished it, contrasts Odysseus with Achilles and Ajax and cites Achilles' speech from *Iliad* 9, it is hard to believe that Antisthenes' defence of Odysseus and of the positive meaning of πολύτροπος was not rooted in the *Odyssey*, rather than in the *Iliad*. As Socrates' initial citation of Apemantos' view in the *Hippias Minor* shows, a contrast between Achilles and Odysseus must (almost inevitably) be a contrast between the central figure of the *Iliad* and the central figure of the *Odyssey*; it is, after all, the Odysseus of the *Odyssey* whom Homer called πολύτροπος. Hippias' mistake (or one of them) was to ground his argument in Book 9 of the *Iliad*, despite how Socrates introduced the subject; Hippias does observe that 'Homer made Odysseus [a liar] in many places both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*' (365c1-2), but in making no distinction between the character in the two poems, he not only shows himself (again) a not particularly sophisticated reader, but also plays into Socrates' hands. As we have already seen, later criticism at least was clear that Odysseus' character 'developed' between the two poems,²³ and it would not surprise to learn that such views were already familiar in the late fifth and fourth centuries. One might indeed think that Hippias' confusion in the *Hippias Minor* either must be read against the existence of such a critical view or itself was one of the stimuli to this later view.

When Socrates asks Hippias for clarification of his view, the question is again phrased not as we might have expected: 'Was not Achilles represented as *polytropos* by Homer?' (364e5-6). Hippias' answer had in fact not excluded the possibility that Achilles had been so represented, as Hippias had been dealing in superlatives; our inference from what follows may be that Socrates phrased his question in this way because he did not (yet) understand how Hippias was using the term, for it is only after Hippias' fuller response that he claims to begin to see that, for Hippias, πολύτροπος is a synonym of ψευδής (365b7-8, cited below). The technique of slow revelation suggests, as indeed we would have known from elsewhere, that the actual meaning of πολύτροπος was anything but undisputed. Hippias' response is that the Homeric Achilles was 'not at all' πολύτροπος, but rather 'very straightforward and most truthful' (ἀπλούστατος καὶ ἀληθέστατος), and in support of this he cites, as apparently also did Antisthenes, the opening of Achilles' great speech to Odysseus in *Iliad* 9:

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
χρὴ μὲν δὴ τὸν μῦθον ἀπηλεγέως ἀποειπεῖν,
ὥσπερ δὴ κρανέω τε καὶ ὥς τελέεσθαι οἶω·

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²³ Cf. above p.0.

ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Αἶδαο πύλῃσιν, 312
 ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθηι ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἵπηι.
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω, ὥς καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται.

ἐν τούτοις δηλοῖ τοῖς ἔπεσιν τὸν τρόπον ἑκατέρου τοῦ ἀνδρός, ὡς ὁ μὲν Ἀχιλλεὺς εἶη ἀληθής τε καὶ ἀπλοῦς, ὁ δὲ Ὀδυσσεὺς πολύτροπός τε καὶ ψευδής· ποιεῖ γὰρ τὸν Ἀχιλλέα εἰς τὸν Ὀδυσσέα λέγοντα ταῦτα τὰ ἔπη.
 Plato, *Hippias Minor* 365a1-b6²⁴

“Son of Laertes, god-born, Odysseus of the many plans, I must speak out straightforwardly as I judge it and think will come about. As hateful to me as the gates of Hades is that man who conceals one thing in his heart and speaks another. But I will tell you how it will be.” In these verses he reveals the character of each man: Achilles is truthful and straightforward, Odysseus *polutropos* and a liar, for he represents Achilles speaking these verses to Odysseus.

Here the later critical tradition was to follow where Hippias, at least the Platonic one, had led,²⁵ and it is worth pausing a moment to note the conclusions which were later drawn from these verses. The exegetical scholia on vv. 307-9 claim that they represent Achilles as φιλότιμος, ἀπλοῦς, φιλαλήθης, βαρύθυμος, εἰρων, and the scholia on v. 309 note that his speech is, as we might say, a rhetoric-free zone: περιπλοκὰς οὐκ οἶδε λόγων. His speech is marked by ‘unelaborated free-speaking’ (ἀκόσμητος παρρησία). The contrast, of course, as in Hippias’ account, is with Odysseus. περιπλοκὰς οὐκ οἶδε λόγων (of Achilles) all but explicitly denies that one of the most familiar ancient interpretations of πολύτροπος was applicable to Achilles, whereas the whole thrust of the exegetical scholia to Odysseus’ speech had been towards working out its strategies, why he speaks as he does and what implicit, ‘concealed’ meanings lie behind his words (cf., e.g., scholia on 226, 252, 259-60); with Achilles, however, it is changes of style which are foregrounded, for there is no doubt (for the scholia) about what he is actually saying. As for Hippias’ understanding of πολύτροπος as synonymous with ψευδής, it is a reasonable conclusion that something very like this was mooted (only to be rejected) by Antisthenes, but there is in fact no other evidence to suggest that such an interpretation was generally familiar before, or indeed widespread thereafter, although πολύτροπος, ‘cunning’, might at any time carry a negative resonance.²⁶ It is Antisthenes and Plato who established that interpretation within the tradition.

The description of Achilles in the scholia on vv. 307-9 as εἰρων is of some interest also in this connection. The Homeric scholia and other critics regularly see

²⁴ The omission of v. 311 is most naturally explained by the fact that it would not contribute to Hippias’ argument.

²⁵ Cf. Giuliano (1995) 50-2. Modern scholars have been much exercised by whether, despite the generalizing form of vv. 312-13, Achilles in fact has Agamemnon or Odysseus in mind in these verses, cf. Heiden (2002) 432-3, citing earlier bibliography; the Platonic Hippias has no doubt that the reference is to Odysseus, and again the later scholiastic tradition was to follow suit, cf. the T-scholia on vv. 312-13 with Erbse’s note.

²⁶ Cf. the passages collected by Montiglio (2011) 162-3.

the trope of εἰρωνεία in Homeric speeches,²⁷ and in those of Achilles no less than any others, including his speech to Odysseus in Book 9 (cf. scholia on vv. 348, 359, 399). Outside Aristotle, εἰρωνεία is not necessarily incompatible with a commitment to truth-telling,²⁸ but in the binary system of oppositions between Achilles and Odysseus which the scholia have inherited and which they elaborate, it is hard not to see the suggestion that, if Achilles is εἰρων, then Odysseus must be ἀλαζών; even in the Aristotelian system, although the mean between ἀλαζονεία and εἰρωνεία is the condition (ἕξις) of being truthful, it is in fact the *alazon*, who ‘takes delight in ψεῦδος’ (EN 4.1127b9-11), who is truly the opposite of the truthful man, ‘for [the *alazon*] is worse [than the *eiron*]’ (EN 4.1127b31-2). The scholia attribute ἀλαζονεία to a number of Homeric characters and speeches, including in fact to one verse (v. 401) of Achilles’ speech to Odysseus in *Iliad* 9, but it is for the scholia a particular characteristic of Hector and the Trojans, often labelled as ἀλαζονεία βαρβαρική.²⁹ Although we ought not place too much weight upon the fact, it is certainly noteworthy in this connection that the principal term used in the *Hippias Minor* to denote ‘deceivers’, such as (in the common view) Odysseus, against whom Achilles’ speech is directed, is indeed ἀλαζών, cf. 369e4, 371d2, and it is precisely in this quality which Socrates, with shocking paradox, claims Achilles surpassed Odysseus (371a2-7). It would of course not be sensible to claim that the *Hippias Minor* lies at the root of a distinction between Achilles and Odysseus as εἰρων and ἀλαζών: too much of what Odysseus says in the *Odyssey*, notably in Books 9-12, was (or could be taken as) such obvious ἀλαζονεία, that the idea must have been a commonplace.³⁰ Rather, we might think of such a commonplace coming together with an opposition between Odysseus and Achilles, an opposition centred upon their confrontation in *Iliad* 9, and itself engendering, perhaps under the influence of Aristotle, the idea that Achilles was εἰρων. The process was doubtless messy and unsystematic, but it is hard to doubt (I think) that the *Hippias Minor* played some part in this critical development also, particularly as Odysseus’ speech to Achilles is not, as Socrates is going to make very clear, ἀλαζονικός, certainly by Odysseus’ standards elsewhere. As is well known, binary oppositions tend to multiply, even where they do not all equally fit the case.

The embassy to Achilles in *Iliad* 9 was a very famous text for later rhetoricians and declaimers,³¹ and Achilles’ opening words are very often cited or evoked. A history of that reception would in fact deserve its own essay, and the

²⁷ Cf. Van der Valk’s edition of Eustathius, II p. lx n.6, Nünlist (2009) 212-13 on ‘rhetorical irony’; Nünlist however perhaps underplays the range of effects which the scholia identify by this term.

²⁸ Eustathius’ note on this speech of Achilles tracks that of the exegetical scholia very closely, but he omits εἰρων from the list of adjectives which describe Achilles (*Hom.* 751.24); this may be because of the negative associations that the term could carry, and Eustathius would not wish his pupils to find such negative characteristics in Achilles.

²⁹ Cf., e.g., the scholia on *Iliad* 8.182, 515, 10.417, 12.441, 16.833.

³⁰ In discussing Menelaos’ account of his travels in *Odyssey* 4, Strabo observes that ‘everyone who recounts his own wanderings is an ἀλαζών’ (1.2.23), and it is indeed hard in that context not to remember Odysseus; in recalling Strabo’s *bon mot*, Eustathius indeed applies it to both Menelaos and Odysseus (*Hom.* 1381.59).

³¹ It is the first passage mentioned by Quintilian (*IO* 10.1.47) in his list of Iliadic passages which are of particular interest to the would-be orator.

Hippias Minor would play a major part in any such history,³² but let me point to only one further aspect of Hippias' quotation which looks forward to the later critical tradition. 'In these verses', says Hippias, 'he reveals each man's character (τρόπος) ...' (365b5-6); Hippias twice in this passage makes clear that the verses are spoken by Achilles, but the subject of δηλοῖ, 'he reveals', must be Homer. Nothing of course is more familiar in ancient quotation-practice than the ascription of the views of a character in a narrative or drama to the poet himself, and the present case is normally dismissed in this way.³³ This may, however, be to let Hippias off too lightly. An Aristotle certainly would have known that although these verses tell us much about Achilles, we should judge Odysseus from his own words, not from those of others; when Aristotle says (*Poetics* 1450b7-10) that 'character (ἦθος) reveals (δηλοῖ) the nature of moral choice (προαίρεσις)', he might almost have been thinking of this same opening to Achilles' speech in *Iliad* 9. Socrates' refusal to take Achilles' self-presentation at face value, without also examining his actions (which also, of course, are revelatory of προαίρεσις (*Poetics* 1454a17-18)), might then be thought to be a simple critical step forward, but it is one whose repercussions are still with us. We might also recall that, in later Homeric criticism at least, many apparent 'problems' in the Homeric text were solved by appealing to the fact that they arise from what a character, not the poet himself, says; this is the so-called λύσις ἐκ τοῦ προσώπου. Something like this can be identified as early as Aristotle (frr. 146, 163 Rose = 370, 387 Gigon),³⁴ but familiarity with the general principle might again be much earlier, and in the present context it is of some interest that Lucia Prauscello has identified such a case, and one associated with Antisthenes, in Plato's *Laws*.³⁵ Here again, then, is another simple critical principle of which the Platonic Hippias is ignorant.

When Socrates picks up the Homeric thread at 369a8, he has apparently established that the true and the false man must be the same, not different, but Hippias is not convinced and wants to restart the debate about Achilles and Odysseus; as several critics have recognized, the argument with Socrates as to whose opinion will prevail is set up by Hippias as a kind of internal reflection of the debate as to which of Achilles and Odysseus is 'better':

εἰ δὲ βούλει, σὺ αὖ ἀντιπαράβαλλε λόγον παρὰ λόγον, ὥς ὁ
ἕτερος ἀμείνων ἐστί· καὶ μᾶλλον εἴσονται οὗτοι ὁπότερος
ἄμεινον λέγει.

Plato, *Hippias Minor* 369c6-8

If you like, oppose argument to argument, showing that the other one is better.
These people will then know more clearly which man speaks better.

Ancient criticism was indeed a very competitive, agonistic business. In Hippias' mind, so we are to understand, it is also clear that he himself is the Achilles; at the

³² The *Hippias Minor* has, for example, a role in the later connection between Achilles' words and rhetorical teaching about 'figured speeches', cf., e.g., Philostratus, *VS* 542.

³³ Cf., e.g., Pinjuh (2014) 111, 113. Eustathius also ascribes the thought of *Iliad* 9.312-13 to 'the poet' and in the context of the poet's rejection of a negative form of πολυτροπία (*Hom.* 1381.39).

³⁴ For bibliography and discussion cf. Nünlist (2009) 116-19.

³⁵ Prauscello forthcoming.

beginning of the dialogue he had presented himself as ‘never having met anyone better (κρείττων) than himself’ in the business of ἀγωνίζεσθαι at Olympia (364a6-8),³⁶ and now he portrays Socrates as an Odysseus:

ὦ Σώκρατες, αἰεὶ σύ τινας τοιούτους πλέκεις λόγους, καὶ ἀπολαμβάνων
ὃ ἂν ᾗ δυσχερέστατον τοῦ λόγου, τούτου ἔχη κατὰ σμικρὸν
ἐφαπτόμενος, καὶ οὐχ ὅλῳ ἀγωνίζηται τῷ πράγματι περὶ ὅτου ἂν ὁ λόγος
ᾗ.

Plato, *Hippias Minor* 369b7-c2³⁷

Socrates, you are always weaving arguments like this, and you pick out the most difficult part of the argument and you stick to it, examining it in detail, and you never deal with the whole subject of the discussion.

Socrates turns this pattern also on its head when he subsequently accuses Hippias of himself playing the role (μυμῆσθαι) of Odysseus (370e10-11). That Hippias shows both Achillean and Odyssean traits might be seen as an ironic dramatisation of Socrates’ argument that the true and the false person are one and the same.³⁸

Socrates proceeds to identify inconsistency, and hence ‘falsehood’, in Achilles’ speech.³⁹ The hero said, as he had already said to Agamemnon (1.169-71), that he would return home ‘tomorrow’, but there is no sign that he ever made the slightest move towards doing so (*Il.* 9. 357-63). Odysseus, on the other hand, tells no lies in the verses which Hippias had quoted, by which Socrates presumably means all of Odysseus’ speech to Achilles in Book 9.⁴⁰ Modern criticism has made much of Odysseus’ ‘economical’ report to Achilles of what Agamemnon had said,⁴¹ although (interestingly) it is not clear that anyone in antiquity ever did; the scholia on v. 392 do link Achilles’ use of the term βασιλεύτερος to Agamemnon’s use at v. 160, but that is not the same as accusing Odysseus of deliberate misrepresentation. Hippias makes no attempt to deny the facts as Socrates stated them, but rather seeks to explain them

³⁶ Hippias’ ‘contest’ with Socrates is therefore Olympic as well as Homeric; cf., e.g., Lampert (2002) 234.

³⁷ Rather similar is Hippias’ complaint about Socrates’ methods of argumentation at *Hippias Maior* 301b2-5. The idea of Socrates as an Odysseus has often been brought into connection with the end of our dialogue (376c), where the Homeric discussion all but otherwise disappears. There Socrates uses the image of ‘wandering’ for the state of *aporia* into which the apparently inevitable, but obviously (at the very least) counter-intuitive, conclusions of the *logos* have led him, cf., e.g., Blondell (2002) 159. Whereas Odysseus was able to end his wanderings when he ‘reached’ (*Od.* 11.122) people who did not know the sea, Socrates and other ἰδιῶται will never cease from wandering, even after ‘reaching’ the σοφοί, for the σοφοί themselves are no less wanderers. For another view of Socratic πολυτροπία in the *Hippias Minor* cf. Montiglio (2011) 42.

³⁸ Later, an association between Odysseus and Hippias became familiar (cf., e.g., Dio 71. 2-3) and may of course have been promoted by Hippias himself.

³⁹ There are, of course, much deeper philosophical issues about ‘speaking (un)truth’ to which this section of the dialogue points, but I here leave them out of account.

⁴⁰ Socrates’ οὐδαμοῦ at 369e5 perhaps resonates with Hippias’ πολλαχοῦ at 365c2.

⁴¹ Cf., e.g., Lynn-George (1988) 118-22, Elmer (2015) 168, citing earlier bibliography.

away; here, as we have seen, the discussion takes the familiar (later) form of a Homeric ‘problem’ and its ‘solution’.⁴² Hippias’ defence of Achilles appeals to a distinction between voluntary and involuntary falsehood, something which any follower of the Platonic Socrates will recognize as very likely to lead to dialectical disaster:

οὐ γὰρ καλῶς σκοπεῖς, ὦ Σώκρατες. ἃ μὲν γὰρ ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς ψεύδεται, οὐκ ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς φαίνεται ψευδόμενος ἀλλ’ ἄκων, διὰ τὴν συμφορὰν τὴν τοῦ στρατοπέδου ἀναγκασθεὶς καταμεῖναι καὶ βοηθῆσαι· ἃ δὲ ὁ Ὀδυσσεύς, ἐκὼν τε καὶ ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς.

Plato, *Hippias Minor* 370e5-9

You do not look at this in the right way, Socrates. When Achilles lies, he obviously does this not by design, but unwillingly, as he is compelled by the terrible situation of the army to remain and offer assistance; when Odysseus lies, he does it willingly and by design.

When Socrates returns to the attack by noting that Achilles says something different yet again to Ajax, namely that he will not fight until the Trojan advance reaches his very own camp (9. 650-5), Hippias can explain that as well:

ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰ ταῦτα ὑπὸ εὐνοίας ἀναπεισθεὶς πρὸς τὸν Αἴαντα ἄλλα εἶπεν ἢ πρὸς τὸν Ὀδυσσεά· ὁ δὲ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἅ τε ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἐπιβουλεύσας ἀεὶ λέγει, καὶ ὅσα ψεύδεται, ὡσαύτως.
εὐνοίας F: εὐηθείας TWf

Plato, *Hippias Minor* 371d8-e3

Here too Achilles was led by goodwill towards Ajax to say different things than he said to Odysseus; Odysseus, on the other hand, always speaks by design, both when he tells the truth and when he lies.

Hippias’ explanations have received a favourable reception in modern criticism, from Wilamowitz on.⁴³ In her study of the debate about the term πολύτροπος, Maria Luzzatto described Hippias’ account as ‘from Homer’s point of view undoubtedly correct’,⁴⁴ and in her important discussion of the *Hippias Minor* Ruby Blondell describes Hippias’ views as ‘perfectly plausible’, whereas Socrates’ treatment of the Homeric scene is ‘farcical’, ‘absurd’ and ‘ludicrous’;⁴⁵ Charles Kahn too describes Socrates’ account as ‘a deliberately misleading account of Achilles’ character, supported by a deep knowledge of the Homeric text ... [a] distorted picture of Achilles’,⁴⁶ and suggests that the whole dialogue may be seen ‘as a kind of *reductio* of

⁴² The truth or otherwise of Odysseus’ report back to the Greek commanders at the end of Book 9 was certainly later discussed as a ζήτημα, cf. below p.0.

⁴³ Cf. Wilamowitz (1920) 138.

⁴⁴ Cf. Luzzatto (1996) 296.

⁴⁵ Cf. Blondell (2002) 145-6; Blondell does, however, see a serious philosophic purpose here and also has useful remarks on the Socratic criticism of literary discussion based on selective quotation. Lampert (2002) 245 describes Socrates’ Homeric exegesis as ‘indefensible’.

⁴⁶ Kahn (1996) 124. Schmiel (1983/4), on the other hand, is prepared to take Socrates’ charges seriously.

the moralizing or “allegorical” interpretation of Homer’. There may, again, be something to be said on the other side.

Before turning to Hippias’ account itself, however, we may consider (again) the versions offered by the extant scholia, which themselves of course may (and probably do) show the influence of the *Hippias Minor*.⁴⁷ The exegetical scholia on v. 309c note the variations in Achilles’ statements: he tells Odysseus that he will go away, Phoenix that he will stay, but not fight, which is in fact a not very accurate account of *Il.* 9. 618-19, and Ajax that he will fight when ‘necessity’ makes him do so. In the context of explaining Achilles’ adverb ἀπηλεγέως in v. 309, the scholia also note that ‘those who wish to cause pain remove any optimistic hopes’, and it may be thought that this applies particularly to the answer to Odysseus. The scholia on vv. 651-2 tell a similar, though rather more nuanced, story:⁴⁸

He says to Odysseus that he will sail away (for he was still terribly inflamed by anger), to Phoenix, when he is already growing calmer (πραϋνόμενος), that he will give thought to staying, and to Ajax he says, from a sense of αἰδώς, that he will come to their aid when the enemy are near at hand; he does not want to make his return to the fighting appear to the Greeks either impossible or imminent, to make clear the magnitude of what he has suffered.

bT-scholia on Homer, *Iliad* 9.651-2

Whether or not this account of Achilles’ behaviour is plausible, it does have the merit of at least taking account of the important interchange with Phoenix, which Hippias and Socrates both ignore in the *Hippias Minor*. Whether Plato expects us to notice the omission from Socrates’ account of Achilles’ words of Phoenix’s speech and of Achilles’ non-committal response to him (vv. 618-19) may be thought uncertain; if the omission is deliberate, then it is tempting to see such an omission as a trap for Hippias, who proves not sharp enough to pick up the point, although some later critics obviously did.⁴⁹

Hippias explains the fact that Achilles did remain at Troy from the fact that ‘he was compelled by the disaster which befell the army to remain and come to their aid’ (370e7-8). As we have seen, the scholia on 309c also appeal to ‘necessity’, but very differently so: on this view, Achilles tells Ajax that he will fight when he has to. The theme of ‘constraint’ upon Achilles appears elsewhere in the scholia, but I think we are at least entitled to ask how ‘plausible’ Hippias’ account at 370e7-8 (cited above) actually is. We might take βοηθῆσαι to refer to Achilles allowing Patroclus to go out to fight in his own armour, but I doubt that many will be convinced that this is what Hippias means; at its best, his is a very loose paraphrase of what happens in the poem, and one of which no sophist, let alone a modern critic, should be proud. It is, of course, fair to point out that many ancient plot summaries may seem to us quite far removed from ‘what actually happens’, but Hippias’ account in 370e is anything but a ‘close reading’. As for Achilles’ reply to Ajax, Hippias (371e1) ascribes this to

⁴⁷ My account here is inevitably close to the important discussion in Giuliano (1995) 50-2.

⁴⁸ Cf., e.g., Pinjuh (2014) 186. [Plut.] *De Hom.* 2.169 also tells a similar story, though with rather different emphases.

⁴⁹ Cf. Lampert (2002) 245. Giuliano (1995) 51 n.104 also notices the omission of Phoenix from the *Hippias Minor*, but asks rather different questions about it.

εὐήθεια or εὕνοια, depending on the reading adopted,⁵⁰ whereas the scholia put it down to αἰδώς, as the A-scholia on vv. 618-19 also explain Achilles' concession to Phoenix. This latter motive is easy enough to understand: Ajax's words, like Phoenix's much longer speech before him, have stung Achilles' sense of how he is perceived by his colleagues – he acknowledges that Ajax's words are κατὰ θυμόν to him (v. 645) – and how it is expected that he should react to the supplicatory embassy which has now come to him; this precisely falls in the realm of αἰδώς (note also αἰδεσσαι in v. 640).⁵¹ It is this too which inhibits the hero from simply leaving his colleagues to their fate and/or from refusing to meet Hector's challenge when his own fate and that of his beloved Myrmidons is at stake; he will, however, exact a very high price for the damage which has been done to his honour. It obviously makes a difference, as the scholia recognize, that he is speaking to Phoenix and to Ajax, not to Agamemnon, but we may well doubt whether either εὐήθεια or εὕνοια is a particularly good explanation for saying to Ajax that he will rejoin the fighting once Hector reaches the Myrmidon camp, 'after killing Argives and setting fire to the ships', a verse missing from Porphyry's quotation of the passage; at the very least, Ajax must have had mixed feelings about Achilles' professed intentions. Once again, it may be objected that I am in danger of demanding from Hippias the kind of 'close reading' and interpretation which we ourselves take for granted, and the absence of which is (notoriously) one of the things which often seems most puzzling about ancient discussions of literature. Whatever view one takes, however, it is I think clear that Hippias' brief explanation hardly does any kind of justice to the Homeric text.

As for the choice between εὐήθεια and εὕνοια, Giuliano has argued strongly in favour of the first alternative, which is that of the principal branch of the tradition, in the sense of '(possession of) good ἦθος' (cf. *Rep.* 3.400d11-e4), as ἦθος is always a central part of ancient discussions of Achilles; we might note that [Plutarch] precisely observes that Achilles' answer to each of the three ambassadors reveals his ἦθος γενναῖον ἅμα καὶ ἀπλοῦν (*De Hom.* 2.169),⁵² and it might be argued that εὐηθείας offers a better contrast to ἐπιβουλεύσας (371e3) than would εὕνοίας. Giuliano further notes that the alternative reading might have arisen because, as time passed, the pejorative sense of εὐήθεια had come to dominate.⁵³ On the other hand, we might be reminded of the link which Thucydides draws between τὸ γενναῖον, which Achilles certainly possesses, and τὸ εὐηθεῖς (3.83.1), and it is at least curious that when Achilles observes to Odysseus that he will not allow Agamemnon to deceive him a second time (*Il.* 9.375-6), the AbT-scholia observe that it is a mark of εὐήθεια to be deceived once by a φίλος, but of μωρία to let it happen twice. Moreover, εὕνοια (towards Ajax) would be an explanation which minimized

⁵⁰ Cf. below p.0.

⁵¹ Cf. also the bT-scholia on v. 642, and Cairns 1993: 92-5, Gill 1996: 193-7 (neither of whom, however, refer to the scholia).

⁵² This passage of [Plutarch] also reminds us of the irony of Socrates' πάνυ γενναίως at *Hipp. Min.* 370d5.

⁵³ Giuliano (1995) 55, cf. also Luzzatto (1996) 320, Pinjuh (2014) 197-8, Culverhouse (2015), and εὐηθείας is also read by Vancamp (1996) 121. Giuliano (1995) 51 also seeks to make Hippias' explanation of εὐήθεια amount to much the same thing as the scholiastic explanation of αἰδώς; that seems to me mistaken. That εὕνοίας is preserved only in F is, of itself, no argument against this reading; on the nature and value of F cf. Dodds (1959) 41-7, Vancamp (1996) 31-3. The account of this passage in Gaudin (1981) 149 seems to me without value.

Achilles' 'deceitfulness', thus bringing him closer to an action which could be described as ἄκων, and would also acknowledge Ajax as a brave (and ἀπλοῦς)⁵⁴ hero in the Achillean mould; in other words, it explains specifically why it is Ajax to whom these words were spoken, and thus gestures towards the very long tradition of myth, art and literature linking these two heroes, not least with regard to the award of Achilles' arms after his death. The reading εὐνοίας thus seems to give Hippias a rather stronger rhetorical point against Socrates, if not necessarily a better reading of Homer.

If it is indeed the case that Hippias' defence of the 'inconsistency' in his and Achilles' position is not a very strong one, we might reflect that it could have been worse, when we remember how Ion 'defends' his position in the dialogue named after him. Socrates, of course, is not particularly interested in the interpretation of *Iliad* 9 for its own sake: the fact that Odysseus appears to tell the truth here but be a notorious liar elsewhere becomes one manifestation of the apparent paradox that the truth-teller and the liar are one and the same, together with the further problems to which that conclusion leads. For the Platonic Socrates, the Homeric text is a useful jumping-off point, not an end in itself. Plato, however, also pushes us towards a more far-reaching view, and one which still presses us urgently today, about the characters of literature. What kinds of questions are we to ask of what they say? How are we to move from what is said in epic or drama to the ethical situations which we ourselves face? By 'defamiliarising' Achilles for us, by showing us a πολύτροπος Achilles, Socrates, who is certainly in this dialogue a 'closer reader' than is Hippias, makes us confront the comfortable (and comforting) assumptions into which criticism of classic (and classical) texts too easily sinks. Socrates may not be particularly interested in proceeding much further down that path, but we can hardly shun the trail towards which he beckons us. Moreover, if we were to substitute ἀνώμαλος for πολύτροπος, the *Hippias Minor* would take us very close to a prominent ancient view of Achilles' character. Apparently in connection with Achilles' behaviour towards Priam in *Iliad* 24, Aristotle declared that Achilles' character was 'changeable, unstable', ἀνώμαλον,⁵⁵ and certainly his changes of mood in that climactic episode might well deserve such a label, however psychologically true modern readers might find this extraordinary portrait of emotional fragility.

Ancient scholars, like their modern descendants, were also much interested in the question of why, when the ambassadors report back at the end of *Iliad* 9, Odysseus only reports the straightforward refusal which Achilles gave to him, without mentioning the rather more hopeful responses to Phoenix and Ajax.⁵⁶ The exegetical scholia on vv. 682-3 ascribe various motives, honourable as well as disreputable, to Odysseus, but in his extended discussion of the matter Eustathius adds (*inter alia*) that one reason for Ajax's own silence might have been his knowledge of the fact that Achilles had made different promises to each of the three ambassadors; as a result of

⁵⁴ Cf., e.g., scholia on *Il.* 9.622, 17.720.

⁵⁵ Fr. 168 R = 391 Gigon, cf. Eustathius, *Hom.* 783.18 (with Van der Valk's note), 1359.17-22, 1365.55-8, 1366.1, Richardson (1980) 273. On this aspect of Achilles cf., e.g., Else (1957) 462-3.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hainsworth's note on *Il.* 9.682-3 and Griffin on 9.676ff. The helpful account of the matter in Scodel (1989) is in fact very close to the ancient discussions and to that of Eustathius; of particular interest is her stress on how often Achilles changes his mind, from Book 1 on, a characteristic which, so she argues, the ambassadors in Book 9 might see as a mark of Achilles' 'inherent unreliability'.

this, Ajax does not think that one should pay any attention to Achilles, given that hero's 'inconsistency' (παλιμβολία).⁵⁷ Whether or not such an observation had ancient forerunners we cannot say,⁵⁸ but it is very hard here not to be reminded of the *Hippias Minor*, where Achilles' πολυτροπία precisely consists in the different responses he gave to Odysseus and Ajax. So too, Porphyry reports that one of the Homeric 'problems' discussed at the Museum in Alexandria was why Odysseus' report back to the Greeks omitted what Achilles had said to Ajax, thereby not reporting 'the truth'.⁵⁹ The solution offered was that Odysseus did indeed give a true report of what Achilles had said to him, but by saying that Achilles only 'threatened' (v. 682) to sail away on the following morning, Odysseus in fact takes account of the different answers which Phoenix and Ajax had received and which he had heard. Here again, then, is a debate in which Odysseus' truthfulness is championed and Achilles' changefulness, whether that be ἀνώμαλον or πολύτροπον, hangs heavy in the background.

The *Hippias Minor*, then, may well lie, at an unknown number of removes, behind more than one important strand of the ancient discussion of *Iliad* 9. More importantly perhaps, we will again be reminded that Socrates' account of Achilles and Odysseus in that book pointed the way towards a reading which was certainly not dismissed out of hand, as it too often is today, by various communities of readers at particular times in the past. With our own philosophical and moral concerns, we may want to insist, like Hippias, that Achilles may be 'inconsistent', but that does not make him a 'liar' or indeed even πολύτροπος; that, however, is a different matter from seeking fairly to assess the claims of the *Hippias Minor* and the critical tradition which seems to have been influenced by it.

I have been largely concerned in this essay with critical traditions which are most visible to us from the Homeric scholia, but it may be that we can in fact trace the influence of the *Hippias Minor* at a much earlier date and in a very significant place. The meeting of Odysseus and Achilles in *Iliad* 9, and in particular Hippias' account of the opening of Achilles' speech, might well be seen with hindsight not merely as a confrontation of two very different characters (in both senses), but also as a marker of the difference between the two poems of which they are the principal focus; the same, of course, might be true for their subsequent meeting in the Underworld in *Odyssey* 11, but that is not something to be pursued here. Certainly, it would not be difficult to show that the *Iliad* is in many senses ἀπλοῦς, whereas the *Odyssey* is both complex and πολύτροπος.⁶⁰ One reason, of course, that it would not be difficult is that

⁵⁷ *Hom.* 783.17-19, cf. 1359.19 on Achilles' παλίμβολον ἦθος; on the choice here and elsewhere between παλιμβουλία and παλιμβολία cf. Van der Valk ad loc.

⁵⁸ Diomedes' conclusion that the only thing which will influence Achilles is that hero's θυμός (*Il.* 9.702-3) might also have played some role in the subsequent critical tradition.

⁵⁹ Cf. MacPhail (2011) 156-9, and the D-scholia on v. 679.

⁶⁰ This holds good, I think, despite the ancient view (cf. the scholia on *Odyssey* 1.1c and d Pontani) that Homer devised the Telemachy in order to add ποικιλία to his poem, or as the scholium on 1.1c puts it, ἵνα μὴ μονότροπος ᾗ τῆς ποιήσεως ὁ τρόπος, an observation which almost invites us to remember πολύτροπος. There is of course an important distinction between the πεπλεγμένον and the ποικίλον. Eustathius expands on how Homer fills out the brief and simple story which forms the story of the *Odyssey* (*Hom.* 1379.41-4), cf. Pontani (2000) 28; Eustathius ascribes to the *Odyssey* a 'depth of thought amidst surface simplicity (ἀπλότης)'.

Aristotle has already shown the way. For Aristotle, the *Iliad* is ἀπλοῦν καὶ παθητικόν, whereas the *Odyssey* is πεπλεγμένον καὶ ἠθικὴ (*Poetics* 1459b14-16).⁶¹ When Aristotle describes the well-constructed tragic plot (ὁ καλῶς ἔχων μῦθος) as ‘single’ and as involving a ‘change from good fortune to bad fortune, not because of any wickedness, but because of a great *hamartia* on the part of a character such as I have stated [i.e. someone of high reputation and prosperity] or a character who is better rather than worse’ (1453a12-16), it is hard not to think of the *Iliad*, if only because Aristotle proceeds to award second prize to a plot which is explicitly like the *Odyssey* (1453a32), and if Homer comes second, then only Homer can also come first.

The essence of the πεπλεγμένον lies in περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις (*Poetics* 1455b33), and the *Odyssey* in fact is ‘recognition all the way through’ (1459b15); recognition itself is defined as ‘a change from ignorance to knowledge, [leading to] either friendship or hostility’ (1452a29-30). There is much that could be said (and has been) about both the power and the limits of Aristotle’s distinctions, but Aristotle’s categorization of the *Odyssey* clearly gives the greatest weight to ‘recognitions’ of personal identity, which are central to Odysseus’ poem. There is, moreover, another way in which the *Odyssey* cannot be ἀπλοῦς for Aristotle, namely that its structure (σύστασις) is double, διπλῇ, because ‘the better and worse characters end up in opposite ways’ (*Poetics* 1453a31-3); we are probably entitled to draw the inference that I just have, namely that the *Iliad* is, in this respect also, ἀπλοῦς (cf. also 1453a12), though we are here entering some of the thorniest problems of the *Poetics*. Nevertheless, a link between the discussion of the characters of Achilles and Odysseus in the *Hippias Minor* and Aristotle’s classification of narrative and plot structures seems not implausible.

Aristotle’s view of the two Homeric poems, at least in the relevant parts of the *Poetics*, seems to follow, almost as an afterthought, from his developed views about tragedy. Nevertheless, epic may well have played a role in the development of those views, both of the ‘simple’ and the ‘complex’ and of *pathos* and *ethos*, given the stark nature of some of the differences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. *Pathos* and *ethos* would require extended discussion, but for what it is worth Aristotle at one point defines πάθος as πρᾶξις φθαρτικὴ ἢ ὀδυνηρά (1452b11), and he exemplifies such an action by ‘deaths in full view, great agonies and woundings and such things’; he is writing of tragedy, but it is hard not to think of the opening of the *Iliad*, with the griefs and deaths caused by the μῆνις of Achilles; as for the *Odyssey*, there too we have ‘many griefs suffered on the sea’, but before that we are promised a poem about an ἀνὴρ πολύτροπος, a poem (in other words) of ἦθος. This is, however, a man whom we do not really get to see until Book 5, whereas in the *Iliad* the μῆνις and its consequences burst upon us almost immediately. The poem of outburst and confrontation is set against the poem of brooding and biding one’s time, of plotting and deception. The point is familiar enough to need no further labouring.⁶² Aristotle needed nothing other than the poems themselves to see how their plot structures differed and to formulate a distinction between them in terms of ‘the simple’ and ‘the complex’ (or ‘entwined’), but we know that he knew the *Hippias Minor* (we would have assumed this anyway)⁶³ and it does not seem utterly implausible that the

⁶¹ On the dichotomy of πάθος and ἦθος cf. esp. Gill (1984).

⁶² For how this distinction may play out in the area of language use cf., e.g., Elmer (2015).

⁶³ Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* 4.1025a6.

distinctions made in that dialogue about Achilles and Odysseus have had some influence on the arguments, or the formulation of the arguments, about plot structures in the *Poetics*. In other words, although epic follows in the *Poetics* on the coat-tails of tragedy, epic, mediated in part through the *Hippias Minor*, might have nudged Aristotle down the path he followed.

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